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Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Staff mobility in the United Nations" (JIU/REP/2006/7).

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STAFF MOBILITY IN THE UNITED NATIONS

Prepared by

Even Fontaine Ortiz
Guangting Tang

Joint Inspection Unit

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Administrative Committee on Coordination (now CEB)
CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (formerly ACC)
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHRM	Office of Human Resources Management
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
OLA	Office of Legal Affairs
OPPBA	Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts
SMCC	Staff-Management Coordination Committee
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Staff mobility is a key element for the Secretariat to develop its activities properly and to adapt its wide range of programmes and activities to a constantly changing global environment. It is also a critical factor for staff, since it has a major influence on their professional and private lives. Mobility is a multidimensional issue; and any mobility policy, if it is to be viable, must take this fundamental principle into account by matching coherently the organizational requirements with those of the staff.

B. There is a consensus that for human resources management to be effective the mobility of staff needs to be ensured, both within the Secretariat, funds and programmes, and between organizations of the common system. Given the complexity of the issue from a system-wide perspective, and especially because of time constraints, this report deals only with the mobility policy within the Secretariat. There is also a consensus that mobility of staff is essential to creating a more versatile, multi-skilled and experienced international civil service capable of fulfilling both the requirements of Headquarters programmes as well as the complex mandates of field activities, thus helping the Organization to increase its flexibility and responsiveness. The Inspectors who carried out the present review believe that there is a need to further develop staff mobility within the United Nations.

C. While recognizing that staff mobility is a crucial element in effective human resources management and that the Organization is evidently in need of an enhanced mobility system, the Inspectors firmly believe that other considerations should also be pondered, in particular, the need for specialized staff, the preservation of institutional memory, and the costs involved.

D. The majority of the staff members interviewed and surveyed are not fully convinced about the effectiveness of the current mobility policy: 40.9% of respondents to the survey indicated that they are "not very satisfied" with the current policy, while 31.7% are "very dissatisfied". Finally, only 12.8% find the policy "encouraging", whereas 32.9% find it "not encouraging at all". The Inspectors do not see this as an expression of opposition to the mobility policy per se, but rather as an expression of a general concern and uncertainty about the viability of the policy and its implementation. They believe that the current policy does not contain enough incentives for the staff to move and that more needs to be done to carry out the mandate of General Assembly resolution 55/258.

E. The Inspectors believe that if the Secretariat is to undertake effectively its work in a challenging and fast-changing environment, there will have to be increased movement of staff. They fully support the principles set out by the Secretary-General in his mobility policy. However, they believe that the current implementation of the policy needs to be further adjusted to fully comply with these principles and with mandates of the General Assembly. Based on the above, the Inspectors conclude that major challenges or obstacles for the further implementation of the mobility policy may be as many as the following:

- The current mobility policy does not fully address the General Assembly requests in many aspects (see paragraphs 12, 13, 14, 15, 22, 26, 27, 37, 57, 58, 67, 69, 70 and 84);
- Despite the efforts made, there is an obvious lack of organization-wide culture of mobility, which is essential to the implementation of the mobility policy (see paragraphs 22 to 28);
- A comprehensive strategic mobility plan is not in place with quantified objectives that identify, inter-alia, the locations targeted, the type and volume of staff movement and associated indicators to measure progress in the implementation of mobility (see paragraphs 37 and 38);

- No forecast for the financial implications of the implementation of the mobility policy has been made (see paragraphs 70 to 75);
- Despite current and planned initiatives, there are no mechanisms in place for knowledge management and knowledge sharing to prevent the potential loss of institutional memory due to increased mobility (see paragraphs 67 to 69);
- Lack of a clear analysis of the Organization's needs regarding mobility to determine what type of skills, when and where they are required, coupled with a detailed inventory of current staff skills and competencies available by location (see paragraphs 37 and 38);
- There are no simple and coherent staff contractual arrangements in place for the implementation of the mobility policy, the proposed harmonization of contracts has not yet happened (see paragraphs 57 to 60);
- Possible legal implications regarding the further implementation of the mobility policy (see paragraphs 59 and 60);
- There are no specific mechanisms in place to cope with a potential increase of cases due to increased mobility that can provide an efficient administration of justice, ensuring a fair treatment of staff regarding the implementation of mobility (see paragraphs 59 and 84 to 86);
- Despite certain initiatives planned or being put in place, there are no enough incentive mechanisms to encourage staff to move (see paragraph 87);
- Regardless of some actions taken, no effective measures have been taken to improve work/life conditions in some of the duty stations, which are the major concern for the staff and for the Organization in respect of the implementation of the mobility policy (see paragraphs 88 to 90); and
- In spite of the consultations held, more consultations between management and staff are required (see paragraphs 22 to 28).

F. Since the Secretariat is currently undergoing a complex reform process — about which Member States have considerably diverging views — and taking into account the challenges and obstacles set out above, the Inspectors would like to caution against the possible risks of further implementing the mobility policy. Meanwhile, concrete measures should be taken for mapping out a comprehensive strategic plan for further implementing the mobility policy. In the meantime, efforts should be made to take concrete measures for mapping out a comprehensive strategic plan for further implementing the mobility policy by taking into account all the elements of the mobility policy so as to make the Organization better equipped for its further implementation. The Inspectors, therefore, would like to make the following recommendation, which they expect to ensure and enhance the effectiveness of the mobility policy.

Recommendation

The General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to resolve the challenges and obstacles identified in the present report (see paragraph E) before further implementing phase 4 of the mobility policy so as to better equip the Organization for the fuller implementation of mobility in the near future and to report to the General Assembly, at its sixty-second session, on the progress made in implementing the present recommendation.

Objective: To provide the General Assembly with an independent, external assessment of the viability, usefulness, cost-effectiveness and impact of the Organization's current mobility policy in the light of the principles and goals stated by the Secretary-General and the related policy directives issued by the General Assembly.

Introduction

1. Since the staff are generally regarded as the Organization's greatest asset, their mobility should be a shared concern of Member States, the Secretariat and the staff members themselves. Mobility is contemplated in the current set of Staff Regulations and Rules: for instance, in accordance with Regulation 1.2(c), staff members are subject to the authority of the Secretary-General and to assignment by him or her to any of the activities or offices of the United Nations. However, for the greater part of the past 60 years of the Organization's existence, the urgency of having a mobile staff has never been so acutely felt as it is today.

2. In recent decades, the United Nations has witnessed profound changes, not only in the political area, but also in the economic and social fields, reflecting our rapidly changing world. The Organization also has changed from being only an international forum or a world body that mainly provides parliamentary, administrative and conference services at Headquarters or at a few main duty stations. It has expanded dramatically, with its mandate today embracing: (a) political activities such as peacekeeping, peace-building, post-conflict national rehabilitation, election-monitoring; (b) economic and technical cooperation; (c) support for human rights and humanitarian operations; (d) drug and crime control; and (e) a range of miscellaneous other activities that have a direct bearing on the lives and well-being of millions of people all over the world.

3. The Inspectors share the general view of the Secretariat that whereas the role and structure of the Organization may have managed to keep pace with these global political, economic and social developments, the management of human resources, and the profile and conditions of service of the staff, have not changed at the same pace. The Organization is increasingly called upon to deliver more field-oriented operational activities for humanitarian assistance, transitional security, post-conflict recovery, development support and monitor human rights. The scope and complexity of such activities require a more versatile, multi-skilled and experienced international civil service, which implies, inter-alia, a more mobile staff.

4. The objective of this report is to provide the General Assembly with an independent, external assessment of the viability, usefulness, cost-effectiveness and impact of the current United Nations mobility policy in the light of the principles and goals stated by the Secretary-General and the related policy directives issued by the General Assembly.

5. Descriptions of the current policy have been drawn from Secretariat documents, notably the management position paper on mobility prepared for discussion at the 27th session of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee (SMCC) entitled "Part III: Increasing Mobility".

6. The Inspectors would like to highlight the participation of staff in the web-based survey. The number of responses received was 1,290[1], which included a considerable amount of additional comments. The theoretical estimated response rate is 11%[2]. However, they believe that the real response rate could have been much higher, for the following reasons:

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[1] Only responses from staff under the 100 series have been considered.

[2] The calculation of the response rate is theoretical, given that the Secretariat could not provide figures of the total number of staff to whom the survey was actually broadcasted. The population used for analytical purposes includes all Secretariat personnel, irrespective of source of funding, holding an appointment of

- Owing to time constraints, the survey had been conducted during the first half of July, a period when a large number of staff are on annual leave;
- For technical reasons, the launch of the survey had been delayed in certain locations;
- The total population considered for the calculation of this estimate included the grades Under-Secretary General and Assistant Secretary-General, which were not part of the survey;
- The total population considered for the calculation of the response rates included Professional and General Service staff under the 100 series;
- If only Professional staff and their responses are considered, the theoretical response rate for this specific group is 17%.[7]

The Inspectors nonetheless consider that the number of responses and comments received constitutes a significant sample from which conclusions can be drawn.

7. The Inspectors wish to express their sincere appreciation to the many people who responded readily to requests for assistance, and particularly to those who so willingly shared their knowledge and expertise through their participation in interviews and in the staff survey. Their views have been very valuable for the preparation of this report.

Methodology

8. The Inspectors reviewed documents and held interviews with heads of department, executive officers, managers and staff at headquarters duty stations (New York, Geneva and Nairobi) and two regional commissions (Economic Commission for Africa and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean). The Joint Inspection Unit also conducted a web-based staff survey throughout the Secretariat to gather staff views and perceptions.

9. In an effort to prepare the current review in full cooperation with the United Nations Secretariat, in March 2006 one of the co-authors travelled to Headquarters, New York, to explain to senior officials the rationale and timeliness of the review and seek their preliminary responses, input and active cooperation. Interviews took place and requests for input from the Secretariat were made but regrettably these were not received. In April 2006, the Inspectors shared with several officials the terms of reference of the review and sought their comments. Again, no comments were received. In June 2006, the Inspectors went on official mission to Headquarters to interview, among others, those high-level officials who were dealing closely with staff mobility. They managed to meet many concerned staff. Unfortunately they were not able to meet two crucial high officials, who had declined to see them for reasons not disclosed.

10. On 4 August 2006, the Joint Inspection Unit sent the draft report to the Secretariat for factual corrections and official comments. The comments received have been reflected, as appropriate, in the current report. In view of the nature of the comments, the Inspectors planned another mission to New York, hoping to further discuss them with the relevant Secretariat officials. Regrettably, that mission had to be cancelled as one Inspector did not receive his entry visa on time (it had been requested in July 2006). The Inspectors wish to recall the Secretary-General's attention to

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one year or more under the 100 series of the Staff Rules. Not included were mission appointees, Field Service staff and language teachers, national officers and public information assistants. As at 30 June 2005, the size of this population was 11,746, which includes the following categories: USG and ASG, Directors (D-2 and D-1), Professional staff (P-5 to P-1), and General Service (G-7 to G-1) and related categories (Security Service and Trades and Crafts). These data have been taken from the report of the Secretary-General, "Composition of the Secretariat", A/60/310.

[7] The population taken into consideration for this calculation is all Secretariat staff, irrespective of source of funding, in the Professional category and under the 100 series (4,124) as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, "Composition of the Secretariat" (A/60/310). The total number of responses received from Professional staff, under the 100 series, is 694.

the need for United Nations officials to observe the provision of the JIU Statute, notably, Article 6(2), which states that "The Inspectors shall be accorded full cooperation by the organizations at all levels, including access to any particular information or document relevant to their work"

11. In its comments to this report, the Secretariat indicated that: "many of the observations and findings contained in the draft report are premature and are likely to be outdated or incorrect by the time the report is issued" and suggested that since it was preparing new documents for consideration by the General Assembly at its sixty-first session, some of the conclusions of the report might be overtaken by events by the time of its discussion by the Assembly. The Inspectors would like to point out, however, that during their interviews in June 2006 with the officials at Headquarters, they had not been informed of any such developments. Furthermore, such documents were still not available when they were finalizing the report. The Inspectors are convinced that many of the findings and conclusions of their report could be used to help guide the further implementation of the current mobility policy. They would also be pleased if the findings and conclusions, already shared with the United Nations Secretariat in the draft report, could be proved to have been overtaken by events and reflected in the promised documents referred to above.

I. LEGISLATIVE MANDATES

12.The General Assembly in its resolution 51/226 requested the Secretary-General to encourage mobility and pursue the implementation of managed reassignment programmes. Subsequently, in its resolution 53/221, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish mechanisms towards, and to implement a policy of, enhanced mobility across functions, departments and duty stations. It encouraged him to explore, through the Administrative Committee on Coordination, the possibility of enhancing mobility among organizations of the United Nations system.

13.In subsequent resolutions (55/258, 57/305 and 59/266) it requested the Secretary-General to develop further criteria for mobility to maximize its benefits for the Organization and ensure fair and equitable treatment of all staff, stating the principles on which mobility should be based, as follows:

(a) Mobility does not negatively affect the continuity and the quality of services and the institutional memory and capacity of the Organization;

(b) Mobility does not lead to the transfer or abolition of posts as a result of vacancies;

(c) Mobility has a positive impact in filling existing high vacancy rates at some United Nations duty stations and regional commissions;

(d) There is a clear differentiation between mobility within duty stations and mobility across duty stations and that the latter is a more important factor in career development;

(e) Mobility is encouraged for all posts in the Professional and higher categories.

14. In addition, resolution 59/266 further develops the above principles along the following lines:

- "Stresses the need to ensure that adequate mechanisms are in place to ensure the accountability of programme managers for the implementation of human resources policies;
- "Requests the Secretary-General to take the steps necessary to ensure that mobility is not used as an instrument of coercion against staff and to ensure that appropriate monitoring and accountability measures are in place;
- "Requests the Secretary-General to develop a strategic plan with indicators, benchmarks, time lines and clear criteria for the implementation of mobility policies and to report thereon, including with information on the financial implications, to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session;

- "Requests the Secretary-General to consider the use of incentives with a view to encouraging staff to move to duty stations with chronically high vacancy rates;
- "Invites host countries, as appropriate, to review their policies for granting work permits to spouses of United Nations staff;
- "Invites the Secretary-General to continue to explore ways of assisting spouses to find employment opportunities;
- "Acknowledges that mobility needs to be supported through greater efforts to improve conditions of life and work at the various duty stations."

II. GENERAL CONCERNS

15. The General Assembly, through several resolutions, has requested the Secretary-General to give full consideration to the need for greater mobility in the context of human resources planning, and to establish mechanisms towards, and to implement a policy of, enhanced mobility across functions, departments and duty stations.

16. Pursuant to the requests of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General in his report "Human Resources management reform"(A/55/253) put forward a proposal on a new mobility policy. It included a set of mechanisms to ensure that the Organization could move people between functions, departments, occupational groups and duty stations:

- To meet its operational requirements;
- To prepare staff to operate in a multidisciplinary environment;
- To develop a more integrated approach to the many facets of the Organization's work;
- To promote greater integration between field and headquarters-based staff;
- To provide staff with varied career opportunities.

17. Through the interviews they conducted and the web-based survey, the Inspectors could perceive that a large number of managers and staff members were sceptical about the current mobility policy. But the Inspectors believe that this does not necessarily mean that they are against the policy as such but rather expresses their general concern and uncertainty about its viability and implementation.

18. In addition to the common concern and uncertainty mentioned above, it is also interesting, indeed, thought-provoking, to note that staff members serving at some headquarters duty stations (New York, Geneva and Vienna) are on the whole more negative towards or less supportive of the mandatory nature of the policy. While on the other hand, their counterparts in Nairobi and most of the regional commissions and field duty stations such as Addis Ababa, appear to be more positive towards the mobility policy.

19. During the interviews, the Inspectors noted that many managers and staff members in the "headquarters" group query the rationale for a "mandatory" mobility policy, and express higher concerns about issues related to the feasibility of mobility, in particular, of staff members engaged in specialized professions, and about the need to maintain institutional memory. Most of the staff are specifically concerned about some of the obviously difficult issues related to mobility, such as appropriate training, spouse employment, education of children and other work/life conditions in some duty stations. And those staff members who are willing to move tend to fear "getting stuck" in the field. The Inspectors believe that this matter could be addressed through well-planned rotational schemes assuring such staff members an onward assignment after serving in the field. Staff members also expressed concern about the potential problems of residency status of their spouses and children remaining in the host countries of their current duty stations.

20. The Inspectors noted that staff members in Nairobi and in the regional commissions, while expressing strong support for the enhanced mobility policy proposed by the Secretary-General, stress that it is imperative to make the policy viable and effective by ensuring equal opportunities for staff throughout the Organization. Staff representatives in one of these duty stations stressed specifically that staff should not be obliged to remain too long at hardship stations but should be given the opportunity to work at "headquarters" duty stations. They hoped that the new mobility policy would seriously address the issue, ensuring mobility not just "across the corridor" but also between duty stations, especially between Headquarters and field duty stations.

21. The Inspectors fully agree with the Secretary-General that because of the scope and complexity of its activities, the Organization needs an effective mobility policy that would create a more versatile multi-skilled and experienced international civil service and prepare its staff for working in a multi-disciplinary world environment. However, before a viable and effective mobility policy is introduced, the Inspectors insist on the need for having a clear understanding, and a balanced estimation, of both the positive and negative aspects of the policy. Ways and means also need to be found to overcome the various challenges and obstacles referred to above. Efforts should therefore be made, first and foremost, to develop a "culture of mobility" within the Organization and to draw up a comprehensive strategic plan for implementing the mobility policy.

III. MAIN FINDINGS

A. Lack of an organizational mobility culture and adequate consultation between management and staff

22. The General Assembly, in its resolutions, nas repeatedly stressed the importance of staff-management consultations. Effective implementation of staff mobility requires, first and foremost, a mobility culture within the Organization, without which, there will not be support from the staff at large. The development of such a culture, in turn, requires open and adequate consultations and engagement with staff and managers about the value and individual challenges of mobility. Only then can the management policy decision be turned into a common and conscientious effort.

23. The Secretariat, in its comments on the draft report, informed the Inspectors about the consultations held between management and staff:

> "Mobility was identified as an element of the strategy for the management of the human resources of the Organization introduced by the Secretary-General in 1994 (A/C.5/49/5). The Secretary-General highlighted the need to take concrete steps in promoting career developing and mobility in his 1997 Report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" (A/51/950). The issue of mobility was discussed in SMCC-XXIII (1999) where it was agreed that mobility was an important and complex issue requiring further consideration and a full discussion at a subsequent meeting. The report of SMCC-XXIV (2000) reflects extensive discussions of mobility, during which consideration was given to proposals submitted by management, the Geneva Staff Coordinating Council, the ESCWA Staff Council, the ECA Staff Union Committee and the staff representatives attending SMCC-XXIV. The discussions resulted in 16 points of convergence (to which the New York Staff Union had reservations), most of which are reflected in the current mobility policy and its implementation plan. Notably, SMCC-XXIV agreed that 'mobility should be viewed in its broadest sense, with mobility requirements being fulfilled by movement among functions, departments, occupations, duty stations and organizations beyond the Secretariat'. This statement has become the basis for the definition of mobility used by the Organization in its current policy."

24. Before introducing the mobility policy, the Secretariat said that it had received comments on the administrative issuances establishing the new staff selection system from staff representatives from seven duty stations and heads and chiefs of administration/ personnel from 23 offices and

departments. It had reviewed these comments and addressed them in the redrafting of the administrative issuances of April 2002, ST/SGB/2002/5 and ST/SGB/2002/6, as well as ST/AI/2002/4. Subsequently, SMCC at its meeting in 2002 agreed that "management had consulted extensively with staff on all aspects of the new staff selection system and, in the process, took into account a significant number of staff concerns".

25. The Secretariat went on to explain to the Inspectors that, in 2005, OHRM had launched a global information campaign for the entire staff to continue to build awareness of the mobility policy and inform them of the support available to help them prepare for mobility. The campaign included a letter from the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management to all staff, followed by briefings with senior managers, executive officers at Headquarters and human resources chiefs at offices away from Headquarters.[4]

26. In this connection, the Inspectors wish to point out that despite all the consultations referred to above, many of the managers and staff members whom they interviewed have expressed their regret that there had not been enough prior consultation between Headquarters and the regional commissions, nor between management and the staff and their representatives before the Secretary-General launched the new mobility policy. Representatives of some departments at Headquarters also complained that little prior consultation had taken place. The Inspectors firmly believe that if there had been sufficient and adequate prior consultation, there would now be fewer misgivings about the new policy and a comprehensive strategic plan for its implementation might have been worked out. They are therefore led to conclude that (a) the consultations held do not properly reflect staff concerns, or (b) the managers and staff members have not been kept properly informed of the development of the consultations.

27. The results of the staff survey further confirm the inadequacy of the consultations. Around 86% of the respondents stated that they had not been consulted in the development of the current mobility policy and over 67% of respondents did not know whether their staff representatives had been consulted. The Inspectors would therefore also like to draw this point to the attention of staff representatives, as it shows that in spite of the consultations that have taken place, staff still feel that they have not been properly informed. They conclude that there is a serious lack of common understanding and awareness of the value and necessity of an enhanced mobility policy among the staff at large. This absence of a mobility culture in the Organization, in the opinion of the Inspectors, constitutes a major challenge for the implementation of the current mobility policy.

28. The Inspectors noted that some progress had been made in establishing the mobility policy and initiating a change in the organizational culture, with the concept of mobility now being accepted as an essential element of the international civil service. Nonetheless, significant challenges still confront its full and effective implementation. The sheer numbers of staff, their different skills and the diverse functions they perform, the dispersion and the differing sizes of the locations where they serve, make the administration of mobility complex and substantially different from the situation prevailing in the United Nations Funds and Programmes. And there are at least 23 occupational groups, not all of which are replicated in all duty stations.

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[4] The Secretariat informed the Inspectors that OHRM had organized townhall meetings and information sessions for 10 departments and offices at New York Headquarters. Human Resources chiefs gave briefings at UNOG, UNOV/UNODC, UNON/UNEP/UNHABITAT, ECLAC, ECA, ESCAP, ESCWA, ECE and UNCTAD. Printed and electronic materials containing answers to frequently asked questions, as well as suggestions on preparing for mobility, were made available on i-Seek, the United Nations Intranet.

B. Lack of a strategic plan for mobility

29. In any organization, the implementation of a mobility scheme is a major undertaking that requires careful planning and that should not disrupt the course of normal operations. The United Nations is no exception in this respect. Given the complexity of the Secretariat, a comprehensive strategic plan is vital. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) has already identified the need for such a plan. The plan should include quantifiable objectives that identify the type and volume of staff movement consistent with the new policy, action plans with timelines and benchmarks to facilitate desired mobility patterns, and metrics that continuously measure changes in the mobility patterns and organizational outcomes.[5] Subsequently, the General Assembly in resolution 59/266 requested the Secretary-General to develop a strategic plan with indicators, benchmarks, timelines and clear criteria for the implementation of mobility policies.

30. Noting the consultations conducted at SMCC-XXIV, the Secretary-General in his report on human resources management reform (A/55/253, paragraphs 38 – 44 and annex IV) presented mobility as one of the building blocks of a comprehensive human resources management implementation programme. Annex IX of the same report stated that a worldwide survey of work/life issues that influence staff members' work and decisions about mobility was being undertaken to ascertain the issues of major concern to staff. In annex III, the Secretary-General stressed the need for the Organization to move from a voluntary to a managed approach to mobility, based on the following principles:

> "(a) Mobility is not an end in itself, but a tool to enable the United Nations to fulfil its operational requirements more effectively;
>
> (b) Mobility patterns will vary depending on the requirements of the job and the location;
>
> (c) Mobility is a shared responsibility between the Organization, managers and staff, in which all must play an active role;
>
> (d) Mobility will be integral to career patterns; career progression will depend, in part, on evidence of mobility."

31. The descriptive information in the following paragraphs has been taken from Secretariat texts on mobility; in particular, the management position paper on mobility prepared for discussion at the 27th session of SMCC entitled "Part III: Increasing Mobility", which was made available on i-Seek. "The mobility policy, introduced in 2002 was established as an integral part of the staff selection system..."[6] (ST/SGB/2002/5 and ST/AI/2002/4). "It was designed to stimulate the mobility of 100 series staff, as an essential element of career development ... Under this policy, mobility was defined broadly to include movement across functions, occupational groups, departments, duty stations and agencies of the United Nations system"[7]; the movement of staff within the same occupational group, department or office and/or duty station is also contemplated as mobility if it involves a change of supervisor, or if the responsibilities assumed are substantially different. Since its introduction the following procedures and mechanisms have been put in place:

(a) Maximum post occupancy: five years for all 100 series staff from G-5 to P-5 and six years for those above P-5;

(b) Minimum post occupancy two years or only one year if it is the second lateral move[8];

(c) All job opportunities are available first for lateral moves of serving staff;

(d) Promotion is linked to mobility: two lateral moves are required before promotion to P-5;

(e) Time-in-grade eligibility requirements have been abolished;

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[5] "Impact of the human resources management reform", A/59/253, 24 September 2004.

[6] iSeek, United Nations intranet.

[7] Ibid.

[8] A lateral move is a movement of a staff member which does not imply a change in his/her current grade.

(f) Departmental occupational networks are being established to promote mobility, staff development, networking and multidisciplinary approaches.

32. The strategy for implementing mobility has four phases:

(a) *"Phase 1: 2002-2004 (completed):* introducing the concept of mobility, on the basis of staff-management consultations and intergovernmental review; promoting culture change; putting in place programmes and mechanisms to prepare and support staff;

(b) *Phase 2: 2004-2005 (completed):* refining the strategic plan for the implementation of managed mobility; developing the necessary policy and IT infrastructure; increasing awareness and understanding and developing networks to support mobility;

(c) *Phase 3: 2005-2006 (ongoing):* refining the necessary policy and IT infrastructure; ongoing communications and awareness building; and

(d) *Phase 4: 2007- 2009:* implementing managed mobility."[9]

33. When staff members reach their post-occupancy limit, their current posts will be included in a mobility compendium and they themselves must initiate the arrangements to move to another function, occupational group or department, the mobility requirement can also be fulfilled by movement to another agency within the United Nations system. Starting May 2007, "managed mobility" is to be introduced, level-by-level in a gradual, phased manner, and spread over time as follows:

Grades	Period
P-3 and G-7	May 2007 - October 2007
P-4 and G-6	November 2007 - April 2008
P-5 and G-5	May 2008 - October 2008
D-1 and D-2	November 2008 - April 2009

Each of these exercises will have three main phases:

(a) *"Compendium.* OHRM will issue a compendium of the posts encumbered by participating staff members who have reached their post occupancy limit… Access to the compendium will become available to a participating staff member through 'My Mobility' module of the Galaxy eStaffing system.

(b) *Expressions of preferences.* Only staff whose posts are in the compendium may indicate their interest for other posts at their personal level in the compendium… When applying to the mobility compendium, staff will be encouraged to apply to at least five posts and will be given an opportunity to express their preferences for posts or locations. While these preferences will not be binding, they will be taken into consideration to the greatest extent possible… Staff members who do not express a preference for any assignment will be automatically reviewed against functions commensurate with their competencies, qualifications, skills and experience.

(c) *Selection Process.* OHRM … will submit to programme managers, for review and evaluation, all expressions of preferences received for posts in their respective department or office as well as the names of staff member who did not apply but meet the competencies, qualifications, skills and experience of the posts. The evaluation process is expected to include an interview – either in person, via video-teleconference or by telephone."[10]

34. OHRM will conduct a matching exercise of all participants for all posts based on the evaluation of the programme managers. A similar exercise will also be conducted by the local human resources office at each duty station for locally recruited GS staff. The Assistant

[9] iSeek, United Nations intranet.
[10] Ibid.

Secretary-General for Human Resources Management will review and approve the proposed reassignments for all Professional staff, and for General Service staff at Headquarters. Proposed reassignments of General Service staff at offices away from Headquarters will be approved by the respective heads of office.

Pilot projects with P-2 staff

35. OHRM in its comments on this report informed the Inspectors that pilot projects had been conducted in which all P-2 staff members who joined the Organization after 1 January 2000 were subject to managed reassignment programmes during their first five years of service, as part of their contractual obligations. The five voluntary reassignment programmes and three managed reassignment programmes for P-2 staff had yielded valuable lessons learned and best practices that in the view of OHRM could be applied to staff at all levels and in different categories. The most critical lesson, according to OHRM, is the fundamental recognition by both individual staff members and programme managers of their statutory obligation to comply with the requirements of the programme.

36. However, the Inspectors believe that some of the lessons learned from this P-2 programme cannot be directly extrapolated to other levels and/or categories of staff, given that mobility, while implied in Staff Regulation 1.2 (c), is not an explicit contractual requirement for other types of staff. Furthermore, most people joining the Organization at the P-2 level are young professionals in the first years of their careers, a time when they are more likely to be eager to learn and ready to take on challenges. They would also at this stage be likely to have fewer family responsibilities that more senior staff.

37. The General Assembly has repeatedly requested the Secretary-General to ensure proper mobility of staff between all the regional commissions and duty stations to overcome the high vacancy rate in certain locations. But the current mobility policy does not include geographical targets, which are essential for tracking progress in reducing the high vacancy rates. The Inspectors, therefore, consider the current mobility plan to be neither comprehensive nor strategic. It lacks quantifiable objectives that identify the locations targeted, the type and volume of staff movement and has no associated indicators to measure progress in implementation. The Inspectors believe that in developing a strategic mobility plan the starting point should be the analysis of the Organization's needs so as to determine what type of skills are required and where. A detailed inventory, by location, should be drawn up of staff skills and competencies. The comparison of the organizational needs, including when and where these needs arise, with what is already available in-house should form the basis for this strategic planning.

38. Effective human resources planning would ensure that the appropriate staff are in place to accomplish the Organization's goals. It entails assessing the current skills and future needs, as well as making projections of age and geographic targets. This should form the basis for staffing and recruitment plans and for determining if future organizational needs will be met by recruiting, training and/or rotating staff. The need for such a gap analysis was addressed by OIOS in one of its recommendations in "Impact of the human resources management reform" (A/59/253). The Inspectors believe that, without a gap analysis, it is hard to define and justify how the current mobility policy might meet the Organization's needs. They could find no evidence that the necessary gap analysis had been undertaken or that the current mobility programme forms an integral part of human resources planning.

C. Mandatory versus voluntary mobility: examples of different approaches

39. Technically, mobility can be voluntary, managed or mandatory. The current policy promotes "voluntary" mobility through different mechanisms during the fixed post-occupancy period. However, and despite the efforts to promote this kind of mobility, the approach is essentially a

mandatory one, as it dictates strict enforcement of current post-occupancy limits (five years for posts from G-5 to P-5, except for P-2 posts; and six years for D-1/2 posts). In its comments on the draft report, OHRM stated that "After 2002, the Organization has facilitated and encouraged the voluntary reassignment of staff members but this does not mean that the mobility policy was intended to be voluntary at any stage."

40. Other organizations, including the European Commission, have opted for a voluntary approach for all their staff, excluding officials in top management posts (grades A-1 and A-2), who should rotate every five to seven years[11]. As the Secretariat has pointed out, policies for mandatory mobility are already in place for a number of United Nations Funds and Programmes (UNDP, UNICEF and UNHCR). The recent inter-agency mobility accord, which regulates the movement of staff among the different agencies in the United Nations system, requires the agreement of the staff member (Article I, paragraph 1.5). Thus this approach can also be considered to be voluntary.

41. The Inspectors wish to point out some differences, for example, between the European Commission's mobility policy and that of the United Nations. The Commission has a mandatory mobility scheme for senior managers only; with mobility for lower levels being voluntary. The United Nations, on the contrary, has put in place a mobility scheme that is mandatory for all levels, but that has less stringent requirements for senior management. All the staff in grades G-5 to P-5 levels have to move every five years; whereas the post occupancy limit for the D-1/2 level is six. Furthermore, senior management will be the last to move according to "phase 4" of the current mobility policy (see above paragraphs 32 and 33). The Inspectors fail to understand the rationale behind this preferential treatment for senior managers. In their view, staff at this level should be exemplary by leading the way in implementing the mobility policy.

42. The authority for the Secretary-General to move staff members wherever they are needed is another element of a mandatory mobility scheme. This authority is defined under Staff Regulation 1.2(c) "... staff members are subject to the authority of the Secretary-General and to assignment by him or her to any of the activities or offices of the United Nations." The General Assembly in its resolution 51/226 limited the Secretary-General's discretionary power of appointment and promotion, outside the established procedures, to his Executive Office and the under-secretary-general and assistant secretary-general levels, as well as special envoys at all levels, while General Assembly resolution 59/266 recognized his authority to assign and deploy staff according to the operational needs of the Organization. The Inspectors believe that the Secretary-General's authority to move staff members wherever they are needed to meet organizational requirements should be explicitly recognized within a clear mobility framework.

43. In accordance with the current mobility policy, OHRM will issue a compendium of the posts encumbered by participating staff members who have reached their post-occupancy limit. Staff members or managers may request a delay in the placement of a post on the compendium, where legitimate reasons relating to personal hardship or Organizational interests exist. Such requests would be reviewed by OHRM and granted in exceptional cases only. In certain special situations, staff members may also for "legitimate reasons" be exempted from rotation and/or have their rotation deferred for a specified period – normally for not more than one year. The Inspectors found that the above criteria have not been discussed nor established to determine when "legitimate reasons" might be applicable. In their view, this is one of the major weaknesses of the current scheme. With only a few months away from the beginning of mandatory rotation, in May 2007, OHRM has not so far even defined the criteria for what might constitute "legitimate reasons", either on organizational grounds or on personal grounds. Nor has it asked departments and offices to identify such cases, for example by defining what might constitute "specialist posts" not subject to mandatory rotation. The issue of mobility and the need to preserve certain highly specialized, location-specific functions is discussed later in this report in paragraph 66.

[11] Commission Decision of 29 September 1999.

44. The Inspectors believe that the primary responsibility for the definition of "non-rotational posts" should rest with the substantive management rather than with OHRM, as under the current policy. OHRM should primarily be responsible for developing the criteria for classifying posts as "non-rotational", and for preparing the related rules and procedures. Nonetheless, the authority to apply these rules should rest with substantive programme management, in close consultation with OHRM.

45. Another element of the current policy that confirms its mandatory nature is that staff members who do not express a preference for any assignment will be automatically reviewed by OHRM against functional posts commensurate with their competencies, qualifications, skills and experience. This further affirms the conflict of responsibilities between substantive programme management and OHRM, as stated above.

46. The Inspectors believe that while mandatory mobility could have a negative impact on staff motivation, voluntary mobility could make it impossible for the Organization to achieve its objectives, particularly in hardship duty stations. The staff survey shows that when given the option to choose among voluntary, mandatory or managed approaches, staff would prefer a managed mobility approach (51.7% of respondents), that is, mobility linked to organizational needs and to career development. This result shows their high level of maturity and commitment to the Organization. The Inspectors are also in favour of "managed" mobility. They see mobility as a responsibility to be shared by the Organization, the managers and the staff. It should be properly managed and linked to career development. It should also be promoted, to the extent possible, through voluntary schemes and attractive incentives.

47. Mandatory mobility would be the last resort only in very special cases and after careful evaluation of previous voluntary mobility initiatives. However, the Inspectors strongly believe that mandatory mobility should be considered in certain crucial areas of the Organization, in particular in sensitive posts. Mobility should also be used as a tool to improve and promote transparency in the administration of resources. Therefore, those posts, especially senior posts, involving the responsibility to administer considerable resources - for example, in procurement, finance and treasury - should be subject to special mandatory mobility requirements. Also, the Inspectors believe that posts mandated with oversight functions should be included under this mandatory approach. This issue has not been addressed by the current mobility policy.

D. Mobility as a managerial tool

48. Mobility should not be an end in itself.[12] The Inspectors believe that the importance of mobility rests in its value as a means to help the Organization achieve its objectives. Thus, ideally, mobility is an element of results-based management. It should provide the Organization with versatile, adaptable and motivated staff with the right profile. But the current policy has become an end in itself, with staff being required to move without any serious consideration given to their career development. It is important to note that the initiative for movement rests mainly with the staff and that managers cannot fully play their managerial role in this respect without support of the staff. Mobility should be a tool primarily for programme managers to better achieve expected results. If managers are to be held accountable for their performance and for accomplishing their objectives, they should be delegated enough authority to manage the resources under their supervision, including the main resource - their staff.

49. The Inspectors find that the staff perceive the current mobility policy merely as a bureaucratic exercise. Many staff members, at all levels within the Organization, see the mobility requirement primarily from a compliance perspective. In the view of the Inspectors, it should be a managerial

[12] A/55/253, annex III, para. 5(a).

tool forming part of results-based management (RBM). OHRM plays a pre-eminent role in the current mobility policy. It is to be the central coordinator of managed reassignment exercises for all Professional staff, Secretariat-wide, and for General Service staff at Headquarters. In cooperation with heads of department, it will also be responsible for the placement of staff who have reached their post-occupancy limit. Furthermore, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management will review and approve the proposed reassignments for all Professional staff and for General Service staff at Headquarters. Additionally, mobility programmes for General Service staff at offices away from Headquarters will be coordinated by their own local human resources offices.

50. The Inspectors believe, however, that giving OHRM a central responsibility for mobility contradicts the foundations of results-based management, which is intended to promote managerial flexibility in the use of resources. In its resolution 60/257 of 8 May 2006, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Coordination to endorse the benchmarking framework proposed by JIU for implementing results-based management. On delegation of authority, benchmark 6 "Managers are empowered through adequate central support services and help-desks for human resources management" clearly defines the main functions of the central support services, OHRM included, as follows: provision of common administrative services; provision of advisory services, including through human resources help desks; access to management knowledge; and monitoring. The Inspectors strongly urge the Secretariat to strictly adhere to this piece of legislation in implementing the mobility policy.

51. In the context of RBM, heads of department/office should retain the authority over lateral transfers within their departments/offices, with policy advice and administrative assistance from OHRM in preparing the compendium and in helping the staff concerned to find the right matches. On the other hand, the Inspectors strongly believe that OHRM should be given the authority as a last resort in cases where both staff members and programme managers fail to do their part in implementing the mobility policy. Otherwise, there might be no mobility beyond the boundaries of "departmental silos". OHRM's automatic review and ultimate replacement of those staff members who do not express an interest in a lateral move when their occupancy limits are due should procedurally be the last step, if all other attempts have failed.

52. Although OHRM repeats the Secretary-General's commitment to implementing managed mobility, the Inspectors are convinced that the current policy is "mandatory" rather than "managed". Some of its elements confirm this: for instance, the provision on post-occupancy limits, and the lack of any apparent linkage between mobility and career development. The Inspectors strongly believe that managed mobility should be used as a managerial strategy consisting of staff movements for the purpose of developing a more versatile and skilful workforce to meet the present and future needs of the Organization. It would thus be clearly linked to career development. It should obviously also take into account the availability of resources. This three-fold definition emphasizes the intrinsic and unalienable linkage between these elements.

53. The Inspectors re-emphasize that, in the context of results-based management, the staff selection process must be a managerial rather than an administrative exercise. No one is in a better position than programme managers to determine the type of staff they need to achieve their performance targets. In the view of the Inspectors, staff selection should not be a support function but the responsibility of managers of substantive departments if they are to be held accountable for programme performance.

54. The Inspectors believe that the main responsibility for implementing mobility policies should rest primarily with programme managers, with OHRM playing a policy-setting, coordinating and advisory role, supporting and monitoring the implementation. This would be in line with related General Assembly resolutions, such as 51/226, which recognizes the role of OHRM as the

primary representative of the Secretary-General in establishing human resources policies and guidelines and supports its central policy authority.

E. Mobility and career development

55. The current mobility policy purports to link mobility to career development, as stated here:

> "Geographic mobility or service at a field mission or another agency, in the same or different duty station, for at least one year would be a pre-condition for promotion to the P-5 level and above. This would help ensure that by the time a staff member has reached the P-5 level, he/she has had a diverse background of increasingly responsible experiences, including management experience, and, therefore, a more integrated perspective and ability to contribute more fully to the Organization's work."[13]

56. In the view of the Inspectors, however, such an approach only establishes an eligibility requirement for promotion. It only vaguely takes into consideration the qualitative aspect of career development. Furthermore, it accords the same value to the so-called "across-the-corridor" mobility as it does to geographical mobility. The Inspectors insist that mobility across duty stations, especially mobility between headquarters duty stations and field duty stations should always have a higher value. Although the objective, clearly stated, is to develop "a diverse background of increasingly responsible experiences, including management experience", no indication is given as to how this could be achieved, or verified, as the current policy does not require the staff to acquire a diverse background but merely to "move". Such a partial approach limits the value of mobility. Understandably, therefore, many staff members perceive mobility as one more bureaucratic requirement to comply with, which benefits neither themselves nor the Organization.

57. The Inspectors believe that the current mobility policy is not properly linked to staff career development. In fact, despite the significant efforts made to enhance staff career development programmes and the establishment of Career Resource Centres in most major duty stations, including career development workshops addressing career planning (almost 2,000 staff participated in 2004-2005 in one-day career development workshops offered at Headquarters and Offices away from Headquarters), there is no effective managed career development within the Secretariat. In this connection, it is important to note that only 35.5% of the respondents to the survey "firmly believe" that the current mobility policy has any impact on their career development; whereas 57% see mobility as no more than a requirement for promotion. Additionally, 66% of the respondents consider mobility as a tool for improving and/or acquiring skills. Evidently, much remains to be done to properly link the mobility policy to the career development of staff.

58. In the view of the Inspectors, this is one of the most important issues that needs to be addressed. As the current policy places special emphasis on the movement of staff simply as a requirement to be complied with, mobility becomes an end in itself which contradicts the principle stated by the Secretary-General that "Mobility is not an end in itself", a principle that the Inspectors also fully subscribe to. They are convinced that mobility is a means that should serve the purpose of improving organizational efficiency through a well-thought-out career development strategy.

F. Mobility as a contractual requirement

59. The General Assembly in its resolution 55/258 recognized the requirement for mobility to be one of the essential elements of the contractual status of staff. The majority of persons applying

[13] iSeek. United Nations intranet.

for a post at the United Nations understand that they are applying for a position in a global organization that has operations in different geographical areas. Thus there is already an "implicit" understanding of potential mobility. However, this needs to be translated into specific mobility requirements that should be clearly reflected in the contractual relationship between the staff member and the Organization. One of the most important experiences gained in the managed reassignment programmes for P-2 staff, as pointed out by OHRM, is that integrating mobility as an "explicit" contractual element makes it easier to apply mobility policies subsequently.

60. The inherent differences in the many types of contract currently in place within the Secretariat form a major obstacle to implementing the mobility policy, since only a limited number of staff are eligible to participate in the mobility programme. The Inspectors share the views expressed by the Secretariat that many staff are currently ineligible to participate owing to their contractual status, which is based in large part on the source of funding for their posts. For example: whereas the majority of staff serving on field appointments are recruited under the 200 and 300 series of the Staff Regulations and Rules, the current mobility policy only applies to staff under the 100 series. The Secretary-General has already proposed to modify and reduce the number of types of contract, so as to harmonize the conditions of service to meet the needs of an increasingly field-based organization. Since these proposals are subject to approval by the General Assembly, the Inspectors consider it advisable to wait for the Assembly's decisions before implementing the next phase of the mobility policy.

61. The Inspectors would like to draw attention to the potential legal implications of further implementing the current policy. They fully share the concerns expressed by the Office of Legal Affairs that

> "... the way it [mobility policy] is proposed to be effected, i.e. through 'limited post occupancy' and mandatory movements before promotions, may not be the appropriate approach to implement the concept of mobility in the United Nations. Although Staff Regulation 1.2 (c) provides that '[s]taff members are subject to the authority of the Secretary-General and to assignment by him or her to any of the activities or offices of the United Nations', and therefore technically, the Secretary-General would be authorised to introduce a mandatory mobility system, the proposed system appears to radically change the conditions of service of staff, and one cannot exclude that some of its elements could be successfully challenged before the United Nations Administrative Tribunal. The proposed system is also very cumbersome and might affect the successful delivery of programmes."[14]

62. The Inspectors therefore strongly recommend that the Secretary-General, before further embarking on the full implementation of the mobility policy, should continue to engage in extensive consultations so as to reach a viable solution that satisfies all the parties concerned. One possible solution could be to guarantee that the current contractual rights of incumbent staff members are respected while the mobility policy is being implemented. In other words, regardless of any future General Assembly decisions on contractual reform, staff members holding permanent contracts should be able to move across the Secretariat, funds and programmes without restrictions to their contractual status. At present, such staff members can move, but their permanent contracts are maintained only for a given period. They must then return to their original posts to avoid losing their contractual rights.

G. Mobility policies require flexibility in their conception and application

63. The Secretary-General in his report "Human resources management reform" said that there was "no single simple way to increase mobility in a complex organization like the United Nations: the diversity of the Organization's work rules out a straightforward rotation approach

[14] Letter from USG for Legal Affairs to the ASG for Human Resources Management dated 10 September 2001.

that is appropriate for a field-based organization".[15] He stressed that "mobility patterns would vary depending on the requirements of the job and the location".[16] Although this confirms the need for a flexible approach to mobility within the Secretariat, the Inspectors found no different mobility patterns for different jobs and/or locations and only in a few instances does the current mobility policy grant, partly and imprecisely, different mobility patterns such as for highly specialized jobs. Furthermore, 50.5 % of the respondents to the staff survey indicated that, in their opinion, the current mobility policy does not take into consideration the requirements of the job and/or the location. Another 28% of the respondents indicated that "they do not know" whether it does or not.

64. The Inspectors concur with the view of the Secretariat that given the complexity of its operations, it is imperative that the Organization take a flexible approach to implementing mobility. To gain experience in implementing the mobility policy, the Inspectors suggest that it might be advisable to start with areas where, comparatively speaking, the policy can be easily implemented. For instance, mobility within the same or similar occupational or professional groups. Of course, specific intra-departmental rotational plans could also be explored. Such schemes already exist within the Secretariat, such as the Rotation Policy of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), where it is to be introduced in 2008, subject to the evolution of the mobility policy of the Secretariat. Based on the experiences gained from this exercise, mobility can then be expanded across functions, departments and between headquarters and field duty stations or even between agencies of the entire United Nations system.

65. Despite the diversity of activities carried out within the Secretariat and in addition to the proposal to develop intra-departmental rotation policies, the Inspectors believe that in certain common areas, such as administration, rotational programmes could be organized across different departments within a given duty station. These programmes should be coordinated locally, including for Professional staff. Such an approach would help reduce the administrative burden at Headquarters.

66. Sometimes the wide variety of activities within the Secretariat calls for highly specialized and location-specific skills. "A limited number of international Professional posts, which involve the performance of highly specialized, location-specific functions would be designated as non-rotational."[17] This issue was taken into consideration within the current mobility policy. OHRM is responsible for designating non-rotational posts in consultation with department heads. The Inspectors are also of the view that a flexible mobility policy should make allowances for such staff who are engaged in very specialized professions, whose mobility may be extremely difficult or ineffective for the Organization - for instance, cartographers or experts in different types of weapons. A list of non-rotational posts should be drawn up, clearly identifying them by specialization and location, to ensure that mobility management is transparent. OHRM stated in commenting on this report that "...the designation of certain occupational groups which will not be subject to the mobility policy is addressed in a draft administrative instruction which is currently under preparation".

67. The Inspectors believe that a flexible mobility policy should also take into consideration special cases such as staff with health problems, handicaps or special family conditions, and staff close to retirement age, etc. They therefore welcome the decision by OHRM to exempt from the mobility requirement those staff members who are within two years of retirement age.

68. The Inspectors further believe that the current mobility policy is not flexible enough to cope with the needs of a complex organization such as the United Nations, and that it does not treat certain types of staff equitably. For instance, in its definition of mobility, the Secretariat attaches

[15] A/55/253, annex III, para. 5.
[16] Ibid.
[17] iSeek, United Nations intranet.

the same value to mobility between different duty stations as to the so-called "mobility across the corridor" or mobility between different sections and work units. While recognizing that "mobility across the corridor" could, in certain cases, imply a change in the functions performed by a staff member, the Inspectors nevertheless wish to stress that the effort required to move geographically should always be recognized and be attributed higher value. "Mobility across the corridor" should not be used as a mechanism to take advantage of circumstances and to bypass the spirit of the mobility policy.

H. Mobility policy versus the need to preserve institutional memory

69. If mobility is not managed properly, it could lead to the Organization's losing its institutional memory. OIOS has already drawn attention to this problem. JIU shares the views included in its report on "Implementation of all provisions of General Assembly resolution 55/258 on human resources management", where OIOS pointed to the need for building into the mobility process mechanisms for knowledge transfer and continuity of expertise:

> "Strong efforts to institutionalize knowledge management practices, starting at the level of units, sections and divisions, should complement efforts to promote mobility. Such an approach would also avert potential resistance from programme managers who are reluctant to lose staff perceived as critical to programme delivery."[18]

70. As indicated by OHRM, there are several knowledge management initiatives that are being put in place within different areas of the Secretariat, such as:

- Secretariat Task Force on Knowledge Sharing, led by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, which is developing a Secretariat knowledge-sharing agenda.
- CEB Task Force on Knowledge Sharing, which will be working on a knowledge-sharing strategy for the United Nations system.
- Pilot knowledge-sharing project of the United Nations Development Group which, combines four organizational knowledge-sharing models around the topic of HIV/AIDS.
- Electronic Content Management (ECM) platform, being developed by the Department of Management, which will incorporate (a) e-management, (b) knowledge sharing and (c) services to intergovernmental bodies.
- Knowledge management tool kit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which incorporates a methodology, as well as reporting and dissemination protocols, for after-action reviews, end-of-assignment reports, handover notes and practice surveys.

71. However, all of these initiatives are still either in the planning or the pilot phase. No comprehensive strategy is yet in place for effective knowledge management within the Secretariat, thus exacerbating the problem of preserving institutional memory during the ongoing mobility exercise. This issue has already been discussed in several papers. The following is taken from the summary of an OIOS report:

> "In the Secretariat, the knowledge-sharing culture is not always open, senior leadership support is limited, incentives and rewards are lacking, few organizational knowledge management strategies exist and there are minimal if any dedicated knowledge-sharing resources".[19]

72. Although certain technological improvements have taken place within different areas of the Secretariat, their benefits have been largely undermined by the lack of an effective global information management strategy, because staff in disparate locations and departments are unable

[18] "Implementation of all provisions of General Assembly resolution 55/258 on human resources management", A/57/726, para. 33.

[19] "Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the thematic evaluation of knowledge management networks in the pursuit of the goals of the Millennium Declaration", E/AC.51/2006/2 (24 March 2006).

to share their knowledge. The Secretary-General himself has admitted that "Neither the culture nor the technology encourage or enable knowledge-sharing."[20] This again leads the Inspectors to conclude that it might be premature to proceed with increased mobility at this stage as this might only bring about greater inefficiency. They therefore caution against further implementation of the current mobility programme without assurances of the preservation of the Organization's institutional memory.

I. Financial implications

73. Implementing mobility has obvious financial implications. The General Assembly, in its resolution 53/221, requested the Secretary-General to include in his budget proposals provisions for implementing human resources management proposals. And in its resolution 59/266, it explicitly requested him to develop a strategic plan with indicators, benchmarks, time lines and clear criteria for implementing mobility policies and to report thereon, including in the report information on the financial implications, to the Assembly at its sixty-first session. Regrettably, however, this fundamental issue seems to have been completely overlooked. OHRM officials told the Inspectors that they did not expect a significant increase in current common staff costs due to increased mobility. They believed that the direct costs associated with it could be absorbed within the appropriation for common staff costs. And since most of the staff are expected to move within a given duty station, that there would be neither travel-related costs nor costs of removal. The Inspectors were also informed that the Office of Planning Programming, Budget and Accounts (OPPBA) had not been requested to provide any specific cost estimate for the mobility exercise.

74. The Inspectors wish to stress that the Secretary-General has explicitly stated that the goals of the mobility policy are "to ensure that the Organization is able to move people between functions, departments, occupational groups and duty stations in order to meet its operational requirements".[21] But the Inspectors wonder why OHRM based its assumption on mobility within a given duty station only. Having failed to find any evidence to support OHRM's assumption, the Inspectors believe that different cost estimates ought to have been prepared, taking into account different mobility scenarios.

75. Commenting on the draft report, OHRM argued that the resource implications for the proposals on mobility "are set out in the detailed Investing report which indicates that the projected costs will be incurred by additional staffing resources and common services requirements and expanded staff development and career support programmes to support mobility". It should be noted that the report mentioned by OHRM is not available at the time of finalizing this report. Furthermore, the Inspectors wish to point out that in spite of repeated requests to OHRM for cost estimates during their mission to New York, they received no answer.

76. Even though such cost estimates may be difficult to quantify because of the lack of baseline data, the Inspectors nonetheless believe that the implementation of mobility can be quantified. Recognizing the changing role of the Organization and the increasingly field-oriented nature of its mandates, the Inspectors assumed that at least 20% of annual lateral transfers of Professional staff will be between duty stations. OHRM, in its comments on the Inspectors' report, has not provided specific figures confirming or refuting the above estimate, stating that "...preliminary estimates indicate that 500 staff would potentially move under the managed mobility programme in 2007, of which only a fraction would change duty stations". But given that the General Assembly has requested that mobility across duty stations should have a higher value than mobility within a given duty station, the Inspectors are surprised to learn from the Secretariat that only "a fraction" of the staff would actually change duty stations. Assuming, therefore, an average cost of some

[20] "Investing in the United Nations: for a stronger Organization worldwide", A/60/692 (7 March 2006).
[21] A/55/253, para. 39

$50,000 per move, the additional common staff costs per biennium would be in the range of $15 to 20 million per biennium.[22]

77. It is important to note that this estimate does not, however, include additional costs associated to the implementation of mobility, which, although difficult to quantify, should not be neglected, such as:

- Additional resources needed by OHRM to manage mobility;
- Additional training requirements (which the Secretariat estimates at $20 million per biennium);
- Time required to induct staff members in their new activities; and
- Time required by staff and programme managers to comply with lengthy administrative procedures.

78. Since the staff selection system and reassignment programmes are resource intensive and operate on an organization-wide scale, increased mobility will require increased administrative resources. The Inspectors therefore believe that there is a need for a more flexible approach to the mobility exercise. They believe that, in particular, local multiple and flexible mechanisms should be developed for greater administrative efficiency.

J. Mobility as a means of sharing the hardship burden

79. All United Nations staff should have equitable access to opportunities in the Organization. Equally, with the exception of persons serving on non-rotational posts, they should all share the burden of service at hardship duty stations and challenging field missions. The Secretariat needs to develop a fair mobility scheme that recognizes the service rendered by staff serving in hardship duty stations by ensuring equal opportunities for all staff of the Organization. For instance, in 1982, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) instituted a formal rotation policy, based on the principle of burden sharing. To guarantee equality of treatment for its entire staff, all staff recruited on indefinite appointments are subject to rotation. One of the main concerns expressed by staff in the web-based survey is the fear of "getting stuck in the field". Seventy-two per cent of respondents considered this issue a major obstacle to the implementation of the current mobility policy. Once assigned to a hardship duty station, it can be difficult for a staff member to return. The Inspectors therefore believe that to promote real solidarity among staff, and to offer fair treatment to those already serving in difficult environments, the Secretariat should create specific rotational schemes.

80. They welcome the idea – included in the current mobility policy – of reducing post-occupancy limits for hardship duty stations. International staff serving in duty stations with a more severe hardship classification (C to E classifications) would have shorter post occupancy limits, and "priority consideration" would be given to these staff for subsequent reassignment. This would contribute to alleviating the problem of chronic vacancies at these locations. Post-occupancy limits for field missions would be determined by the respective managing departments in accordance with operational needs, security considerations, etc. In all cases, the limits would not exceed the current five or six years. In the view of the Inspectors, the above proposal does not sufficiently address staff members' major concern of "getting stuck in the field". They believe

[22] The population taken into consideration for this calculation is all Secretariat staff, irrespective of source of funding, in the Professional and higher categories under 100 series (4,565), as stated in the report of the Secretary-General, "Composition of the Secretariat" (A/60/310). The Inspectors assumed that all Professional staff would move over a period of five years, as foreseen under the current policy. They have also assumed for every year of the period that 10% of staff would not be subject to mobility due to retirement (staff within 2 years from retirement are not subject to mobility) and that 3% of staff might receive a promotion, implying that they are not required to move. The precise calculation, taking into consideration all the above factors, is USD 16 million of additional costs per biennium.

that it should be more specific and that, in particular, the terms "shorter occupancy limits" and "priority consideration" need to be clearly defined and quantified. The Inspectors welcome the flexibility offered to the managing departments to set their own post-occupancy limits. However, this could lead to inconsistent implementation of the policy, as different departments might decide on different post-occupancy limits for the same duty station. This is where OHRM can play a central advisory and coordinating role.

81. The Inspectors believe that many staff members would be willing to serve in hardship duty stations for a limited period of time if their onward assignments were to be assured, as this would alleviate their fear of "getting stuck in the field". To make this a reality, flexible intra-departmental or occupational rotation schemes would have to be introduced. In this respect, they welcome the OCHA initiative, even though it is planned only for OCHA international Professional staff who meet certain criteria. The intra-departmental rotation schemes should be open to qualified staff members serving in other departments within the Secretariat who are willing to serve on a temporary basis. This approach would increase the number of staff available to serve in hardship duty stations and would provide staff members with a unique opportunity to gain wider professional and personal experience.

K. Mobility of General Service staff

82. The Inspectors welcome most of the initiatives in the current mobility policy to increase and improve the mobility of General Service staff. These include:

- More G to P posts to be made available;
- Recognition of service in United Nations peace operations; and
- Enhancements in inter-agency mobility, whereby General Service staff members, moving from another agency within the duty station, or to a different duty station if they relocate themselves, are allowed to apply for and be appointed at the level of the new post instead of at the entry level.

83. The Inspectors welcome and support the agreement reached by SMCC at its XXVII session to request Member States to lift the 5% limit on General Service staff assignments to field missions. However, they would like to point to some artificial barriers to the promotion of G staff to P posts. For example, whereas General Service staff in the United Nations can apply for Professional posts only through the G to P examination, General Service staff from any other organization of the United Nations common system can apply as external candidates. This inconsistency also needs to be addressed within the mobility policy.

84. With regard to recognizing service in United Nations peace operations, the mobility policy states:

> "Staff going on assignment to field missions could maintain a lien on their post for a maximum of two years. Recognition of achievements and experience gained in peace operations as a positive 'job enrichment', by maintaining ongoing contact with the staff member during his/her release and creating an atmosphere of welcoming back upon return."[23]

The Inspectors are of the view that further elaboration is required before expanding the mobility scheme to the General Service staff.

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[23] iSeek, United Nations intranet.

L. Accountability for mobility

85. The current policy describes related accountability, for the three major actors involved in the mobility process: management, staff and OHRM, as follows:

> a) "Accountability of management. Heads of Departments and Offices would be responsible for putting into place systems which would support mobility, including standard operating procedures, staff training and succession planning, to ensure that the institutional capacity to deliver the programme is preserved. They would retain the authority to move staff laterally within their departments and would also be held accountable for their compliance with the mobility policy, in releasing and accepting staff members who are selected to be moved or need to be reassigned, including those placed by OHRM.... Managerial performance in human resources, including in meeting their responsibilities with respect to the mobility policy, would become an integral part of performance evaluation conducted by the Management Performance Board. Hence, the Board would be used as an instrument to enforcing managerial accountability at the highest level.
>
> b) Accountability of OHRM. In cases where staff members were unwilling or unable to move in accordance with the mobility policy, OHRM would have the authority to place those staff members. OHRM would work with departments to ensure that staff are mobile in their careers, in accordance with the mobility policy. OHRM's monitoring function would be strengthened in order to assist with the early identification of potential problems, so that they can be addressed in a timely fashion and recorded for further action, if warranted. Additionally, OHRM would advise Heads of Departments and Offices of the names of programme managers who have either blocked staff mobility or otherwise demonstrated a lack of commitment to the career development of individual staff members.... Heads of Departments and Offices would be expected to demonstrate that appropriate steps have been taken to address the issue with the individual manager, including in the context of the manager's performance appraisal. OHRM would include statistics on the number of occasions the Office has had to draw such matters to the attention of the Head of Department/Office in its annual monitoring report to the Secretary-General.
>
> c) Accountability of staff. Staff would be required to assume their responsibility to be mobile and for availing themselves of the career advancement and development opportunities the assumption of such a responsibility presents. Mobility can be achieved through actively applying for vacancies as well as participation in the managed mobility programme."[24]

86. In the above distribution of accountability shares, the Inspectors would like to highlight that whereas management and staff members are given some responsibilities, OHRM is only given authority without any clear accountability. The above description was taken from i-Seek, the United Nations intranet, and is the only information the Inspectors could find included in the current policy regarding mobility and its associated accountability. The Inspectors see that text as evidence that no clear understanding of the accountability concept exists. Furthermore, they find no justification for the lack of accountability assigned to OHRM in view of the major role it has to play in implementing mobility.

M. Mobility and administration of justice

87. In successive resolutions, notably, 55/258, 57/305 and 59/266, the General Assembly has requested the Secretary-General to develop further criteria for mobility to maximize its benefits for the Organization and to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all staff and to avoid its possible abuse as an instrument of coercion against staff, taking into account job security in the Organization and other relevant factors.

88. The results of the staff survey reflect both a lack of knowledge of the mechanisms available (39.8%) and mistrust over the adequacy of current mechanisms to cope with the issues related to mobility (50.1%). The Inspectors believe that the current system of administration of justice is

[24] iSeek, United Nations intranet, Management position paper on mobility prepared for discussion at the 27th session of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee (SMCC) entitled "Part III: Increasing Mobility".

slow and cumbersome, and inadequate for coping with increased mobility. New mechanisms should be developed, at the local level, for resolving conflicts quickly. Such mechanisms could take the form of joint panels formed by management and staff representatives, with strict deadlines set for accomplishing their tasks. Commenting on this report, OHRM stated as follows:

> "The mechanisms to deal with conflict resolution in the Secretariat are set out in ST/IC/2004/4. As agreed at SMCC-XXVII, a focal point will be established in OHRM so that heads of staff councils and staff unions could report irregularities or concerns regarding the implementation of the mobility policy. Pending consideration of the recommendations of the Redesign Panel, the General Assembly in resolution 59/283 introduced a number of interim measures to improve the justice system in the United Nations".

89. The independent experts of the Redesign Panel appointed by the Secretary-General at the request of the General Assembly to review and redesign the internal justice system recently further confirmed the inadequacy of the administration of justice in the Organization. They concluded that the United Nations does not have an efficient, effective, independent and well-resourced internal justice system, and that a fundamental overhaul of the internal justice system of the Organization is essential for successfully managing the reform. The conclusions of the Panel coincide with the views of the Inspectors and with the views set out in a previous JIU report:

> "the system for administration of justice at the United Nations is slow, costly and cumbersome. It also appears to be, in several significant ways, far less effective than it could or should be."[25]

N. Mobility as a motivational element

90. The Inspectors are convinced that well-designed mobility schemes can be a powerful motivational tool for both management and staff. The key to designing such schemes lies in matching the needs of the Organization with the identified needs and skills of staff. These staff needs and skills should further be taken into account when developing a mobility policy that could act as a strong motivational element. In this respect, the web-based staff survey can be of some help to OHRM to further broaden its views on mobility and to identify specific needs of the staff members and the importance that they attach to the mobility policy. Sixty per cent of respondents to the survey were not satisfied with the current policy (of these, 27.5% said that the current policy was of "little" encouragement to them; and 32.5% indicated that it is "not at all" encouraging). These results show that the Secretariat's information campaign on mobility has contributed little to improving staff motivation and perceptions of the implementation of mobility. Some further results and conclusions of the survey are set out below.

O. Mobility and work/life issues

91. The Inspectors believe that the Secretariat is well aware of most of the concerns of the staff. However, it needs to do much more to properly address these concerns through drawing up concrete and meaningful action plans. The survey results show that respondents are not informed of any specific measures taken or planned to improve life-work conditions (e.g. spouse employment, security, working environment) as an incentive to mobility: 73.8 % of respondents consider that they have not enough information (of which 25.8% stated "little" information and 48% "no information at all"). The main concerns expressed in the responses, and in order of importance, are as follows:

- "getting stuck in the field" (48%);
- work-life . ues (48%);
- health and security (48%);

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[25] "Administration of Justice at the United Nations", JIU/REP/2000/1.

- spouse employment (46%);
- assurance of the possibility of returning to the original duty station (46%);
- lack of appropriate training (39%);
- legal residency restrictions of staff members and dependants (33%).

92. The analysis of the comments received through the survey points to great concern related to work/life issues. Most of the respondents believe that the current mobility policy does not properly address questions related to the impact of mobility in their family lives and in the education of their children. The Inspectors also found the current policy to be vague in this regard. Staff members moving to a new duty station are offered little support to find schools, housing, etc. Furthermore, they have to rely on the understanding of their direct supervisors to allow them the necessary time to settle into their new environment. OHRM has already embarked on several initiatives to address work and life issues, particularly regarding spouse employment. These include a setting up a Spouse Support Programme (in 2004), creating databases and networks at many duty stations, and appointing focal points for spouse employment at all major duty stations. OHRM has also introduced semi-annual "Job Search Workshops" to assist spouses in finding employment in both a United Nations and non-United Nations context, and developing an information network. To date, five workshops have been conducted with 80 spouses participating. The Inspectors nevertheless believe that much more needs to be done. For example:

- Increasing and improving the information already available through the human resources office or staff counselors to staff members when they move to a new place;
- Reaching preferential agreements with schools, as well as with real estate agencies which could provide the necessary services to make relocation easier.

93. The Inspectors support the initiative of the Secretariat, which

> "... has maintained its membership with the Permits Foundation, an association of international companies working together to encourage Governments to relax work permit regulations in order to assist with expatriate spouse employment. Recognizing that the requirement to renounce permanent resident status as a condition of employment with the United Nations creates major obstacles for mobility, the Secretary-General has requested the General Assembly in the 61st session to reconsider this requirement in order to provide a more secure basis for their families to remain in that country while the staff member is required to serve in another duty station or field operation."[26]

P. Mobility across the United Nations system

94. In November 2005, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) issued the Inter-Agency Mobility Accord. The Accord replaces the Inter-organization agreement concerning transfer, secondment or loan of staff among the organizations applying the United Nations common system of salaries and allowances. It was drawn up at the common system level by the Human Resources Network. The Inspectors welcome this initiative as a major development towards the enhancement of staff mobility across the United Nations common system and express their readiness to conduct another review on inter-agency mobility throughout the system at a later date.

95. The Inspectors believe that the staff of the United Nations system should have the opportunity to move, as *internal* candidates, throughout the Secretariat and agencies, and the various funds and programmes. This would not only increase the career opportunities but, even more importantly, bring to the system fresh experiences and knowledge. The status of the candidates for inter-agency mobility, including between United Nations funds and programmes, and including civilian staff for peace operations, remains an important question. Who is and who should be

[26] Information included in the Secretariat's comments on this report.

considered as internal and external candidates for recruitment, transfer and promotion in the various parts of the United Nations system? This could be the subject of further work by JIU.